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ABSTRACT

The oldest literary efforts on the subject of leadership view the leader as a person with certain describable traits. Despite intensive study, however, researchers have been unable to develop any meaningful list of leadership attributes. Empirical studies suggest that leadership is a dynamic process that varies with changes in leaders, followers, and situations. Analysis of leadership, then, should involve not only study of leaders as individuals but also of the circumstances and groups involved in a specific situation. Current literature seems to support this situational-functional approach to leadership study. Using this approach, a distinction can be made between leadership activities that contribute to the achievement of some specific group goal (the "initiating structure" function) and those that maintain and strengthen the group itself (the "consideration" function). Initiating structure and consideration are separate and distinct dimensions of leadership, and the behavior of a leader can be described as any mix of these two functions. However, the behavior of the most effective leader usually can be described as high in both dimensions. (Author/JG)

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CONCEPTS OF LEADERSHIP

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Leadership is a topic that has been subjected to extensive study and speculation in the past half century. There is considerable empirically derived evidence about leadership, but such findings frequently are as contradictory as the various opinions, speculations, and misconceptions of the leadership phenomenon.

It would seem that the plethora of data, findings, conclusions, assumptions, and suppositions on the subject of leadership would support suggestions for the training and development of leaders in education. This paper represents an attempt to discuss and explain concepts that could lead to such suggestions for training and development.

Approaches to the Study of Leadership

Four general approaches to the study of leadership will be considered. Each approach is somewhat diverse, but there are similarities among the four. All may have potential for application to educational leadership although applicability for at least two approaches could be described as limited.

The central person theory will receive brief consideration with emphasis to be placed on the charismatic, traits or characteristics, and situational-functional schools of thought.

The Central Person

Freud followed a well rooted linguistic habit when he labelled as leader the person around whom a group crystallizes. This usage led to what is described as a central person theory of leadership. It is based upon the idea that there is one central person around whom a group's processes will develop.

A Modern Interpretation

Redl's investigation identified a number of types of activities having to do with formation of a group. However, these seem to be activities which, in modern parlance, cannot really be classified as acts of leadership. Instead, rather than connoting leadership as the word is used today, central person would seem to refer more to a role limited to the original formation of some type of group.[1]

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[1] Fritz Redl, "Group Emotion and Leadership," Psychiatry, 4, No. 4 (1942), 535-84.

As a "full-blown" theory or school of thought concerning leadership the central person concept would appear too limited. However, it is possible that such a concept may have some utility in that the leader in education almost constantly works in group situations. Also, at least in one respect, central person's concern with groups is in line with an approach to leadership study in which "groups became the focus for researchers in the hope that one might identify conditions under which an individual could effectively function as a leader" (an approach present in most recent theorizing and research about leaders and leadership).[2]

Charismatic

Charisma as a leadership concept is an extension of the trait approach to be discussed later. Currently, the word "charisma" is an example of one of those overworked terms that suddenly surface from the semantic depths to decorate the prose of writers in various fields. Charisma has been found a useful word to describe an elusive charm, magnetism, persuasive power and capacity to excite and inspire others.

The Charismatic Trait

Charisma usually is viewed as a trait, albeit a complex one, almost bordering on the supernatural. It is derivative of the Greek word charis, meaning grace, and is taken from a Biblical context. The picture conveyed is one of a mysterious quality that defies meaningful analysis and exudes the type of charm implied by the word grace.

Some would perceive the charismatic trait as a divinely conferred gift or power. If not seen in this way, charisma may be considered at least as a personal quality giving an individual influence or even authority over large numbers of people. Charisma, then, is fortified by an emotionally held conviction that a specific individual is a leader possessed of an almost magical aura which sets him apart from all others.

An Image

Of course, charisma can be created and carefully nurtured. The charismatic leader could be self-made or, more likely, the product of an intensive image building campaign. It follows that the charismatic leader's reign might be very short-lived. His appeal is predicated on apparent success, and failure will not be tolerated by followers of the individual whose attraction is based on charisma. Failure, in fact, could lead to almost instantaneous removal from the leadership role.

Comparisons with Other Approaches

As previously noted, charisma is considered a trait and as such it is an extension of the trait study of leadership. It is possible, too, that an individual perceived as charismatic might serve the group formative role of the central person according to that theory.

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[2]Thomas J. Sergiovanni and Fred Carver, The New School Executive, A Theory of Administration (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1973), p. 198.

Any theory of charismatic leadership could be likened to situational-functional leadership, a school of thought yet to be considered. Leaders with so-called charismatic appeal seem to rise to power and influence in specific situations in times of dire need and strife. Such leaders have certain functions to carry out in a given situation and are at least in part, products of the situation.

Traits or Characteristics

The oldest literary efforts on the subject of leadership reflect attempts to consider the leader as a separate entity possessed of certain definable, describable traits or characteristics. Prior to 1945 most of the studies of leadership were devoted primarily to the identification of such traits or qualities of leaders. These studies were based partially on the assumption that humans could be divided into two groups - - the leaders and the followers. Consequently, leaders would have to possess certain traits or qualities not possessed by followers. This hypothesis, of course, is a reflection of the philosophy that leaders are born, not made.[3]

Methodology

Many studies were undertaken to determine physical, intellectual, and personality traits of a leader only occasionally compared to followers. The method has been one of concentrating primarily on the leader usually identified by virtue of the fact that he or she holds an office. Some vestiges of this methodology seem to persist, to some degree, today.

Concentration on the leader often may be to the total exclusion of the followers or the situation in which the leader or the led might find themselves. Therefore, the leader may be seen only as occupying rather inertly a status position relative to other individuals whose relationships to him are not clear.

Trait Approach: General Findings

Early studies focusing on the leader and his traits or characteristics resulted in lengthy lists of specific physical or personality factors necessary for leadership.

Scholars duly noted that leaders are older, taller, heavier, more athletic, better appearing, and brighter than followers. Leaders can be considered superior to followers in scholarship, knowledge, insight, originality, adaptability, initiative, responsibility, persistence, self-confidence, emotional control, sociability, diplomacy, tact, popularity, prestige, and cooperativeness.

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[3]Edgar L. Morphet, Roe Johns, Theodore Reller, Educational Organization and Administration, Third Edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 130

Naturally, leaders have been found to be more extroverted than followers and seem to rank higher in socio-economic status. The deep resonant voices of those identified as leaders can also be heard. And, as noted by one set of writers: "Evidence has been found that well accepted leaders tend to display better adjustment on various personality tests."[4]

Limitations

In the older approaches, then, attention was given to "leadership as a personal quality" or a special combination of personal characteristics.[5] Even today a basic problem in such approaches seems to be that leadership, per se, is not always defined. Due to this lack of definition, investigators have not always agreed as to what is being studied, and methods used sometimes have borne little relationship to leadership as such.

Traits or characteristics deemed essential for effective leadership frequently are selected arbitrarily by those following the trait orientation to research. Thus, these so called important characteristics may be little more than someone's opinion of which attributes leaders should possess. And, to compound the possible fallacy, these qualities, such as intelligence, are felt to be transferable from one situation to another.[6]

Trait Lists

Very few of the numerous lists of leadership traits have many items in common. For example, Bird made an extensive examination of the research relevant to leadership traits and characteristics conducted prior to 1940. He was able to compile a long list of traits ostensibly differentiating leaders from non-leaders. However, Bird's results were discouraging in that only about 5 percent of the traits were common to four or more investigations.[7]

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[4]Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (eds.), Group Dynamics: Research and Theory, Third Edition (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), p. 302

[5]Alex Bavelas, "Leadership: Man and Function," Administrative Science Quarterly, 4, No. 4 (March, 1960), 491

[6]Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior, Second Edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 68

[7]Cartwright and Zander, p. 3

Stogdill's later survey of the literature was only slightly more encouraging in that he found a rather limited number of areas of commonality. According to Stogdill, the average person who occupies a position of leadership should tend to exceed the average member of his group in intelligence, scholarship, dependability, activity, social participation, and socio-economic status. These conclusions were based on uniformly positive evidence from fifteen or more of the studies surveyed.

If factors in common in ten or more studies were considered, Stogdill's list would expand. Added would be sociability, initiative, persistence, knowing how to get things done, self-confidence, alertness to and insight into situations, cooperativeness, popularity, adaptability, and verbal facility.[8]

A similar analysis was completed by Myers in 1954. The conclusions concerning the relationship of traits to leadership can be summarized as follows:

1. No physical characteristics are significantly related to leadership.

2. There is no really significant relationship between superior intelligence and leadership.

3. Knowledge applicable to the problems faced by a group contributes significantly to leadership status.

4. Insight, initiative, cooperation, orginality, ambition, persistence, emotional stability, judgment, popularity, and communication skills do tend to correlate with leadership.[9]

Further Limitations

Most conclusions from surveys of trait studies are based upon perhaps ten to fifteen trait studies from a multitude of such endeavors. Therefore, reports of commonality of traits from list to list really cannot be considered conclusive evidence that all leaders possess certain characteristics.

The obvious point is that despite extensive study researchers have been unable to develop any meaningful list of attributes of leadership. For instance, scholars are not even in agreement on a connection between leadership and such variables as chronological age, height, weight, physique, energy, appearance, dominance self sufficiency, emotional control, and introversion-extroversion.

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[8]Ralph M. Stogdill, "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: A Survey of the Literature," In C. G. Browne and Thomas Cohn (eds.). The Study of Leadership (Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1958), pp. 50-61.

[9]Morphet, Johns and Reller, p. 131.

Tentative Conclusions

Leadership does not seem to be a matter of specific traits or characteristics applicable at all times to all situations. As one writer concluded, "Fifty years of study have failed to produce one personality trait or set of qualities that can be used to discriminate leaders and non-leaders."[10]

A person does not become a leader merely because he possesses some combination of traits. According to Stogdill," the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationship to the characteristics, activities, and goals of the followers."[11] Empirical studies suggest that leadership is a dynamic process that varies from situation to situation with changes in leaders, followers, and situations. Current literature seems to support this situational or leader behavior approach to leadership study.[12] Personal characteristics of leaders appear to differ according to the situation with leaders tending to remain leaders only in situations where the activity is similar.[13]

Thus, we have another approach to the study of leadership. Situational aspects should be considered because traits or characteristics may be relevant only to specific situations. Analysis of leadership, then, should involve not only study of leaders as individuals but also of situations and groups involved in the specific situation. Obviously, the group referent is of critical importance in education, and the groups are operating in specific situations.

Situational-Functional

As stated previously, the attempt to identify traits or characteristics distinguishing leaders from non-leaders has met with most limited success. Researchers very gradually appear to have come to the realization that even certain minimal abilities probably required of all leaders are widely distributed among leaders and non-leaders alike. Apparent, too, is that leadership traits necessary for effectiveness in one group or situation may be quite different from those necessary in another setting.

Situational Aspects

Many writers have dealt with the situational aspects of leadership. Gibb, for one, insisted that leadership always is relative to the situation. He noted that the set of circumstances existing at a given moment could determine which attributes of personality should be exhibited by the leader.[14]

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[10]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 68.

[11]Stogdill in Browne and Cohn (eds.), p 58

[12]Hersey and Blanchard, p 68

[13]Morphet, Johns, Reller, p 132

[14]Cecil A. Gibb, "The Principles and Traits of Leadership," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 42 (1947), 273.

Such an approach is generally accepted as being the most productive to the understanding of leadership. The individual leader remains an important object of leadership study, but it is now generally recognized that he or she really cannot be studied. Thus, the focus is placed on the situation and function of a leader's behavior in a social system rather than on "leader traits".[15]

Group Emphasis

The situational-functional approach should have much utility for educators including educational administrators. This approach incorporates a very basic concern for leadership in the group context and allows for analysis of leadership needs in relation to group dynamics and function. As the educator is concerned with leadership in a small group context, it is necessary that he or she be considered as leader of a group in a rather specific situation in which goals are discernible. It is imperative, then, for the effective leader to have an understanding of people in groups.

Non-Generalizable Leadership

The idea that leadership is not necessarily generalizable from situation to situation is fundamental to the situational-functional point of view. The way an individual leads in one situation may or may not be applicable to another situation. The leadership techniques required for effectiveness can depend on the situational variables. The needed leadership skills also may depend on the somewhat unique functions expected of the aspiring leader in the particular situation in which he or she and a group of potential followers find themselves.

As pointed out by one writer, it may not be meaningful to speak of an effective leader or an ineffective leader. Instead, "we can only speak of a leader who tends to be effective in one situation and ineffective in another."[16] In other words, leadership techniques, or the actual leader, successful in one situation may be totally inadequate in another set of circumstances.

Description of Situational Leadership

A situational-functional orientation to the leadership phenomenon literally cries out for some description of leadership as an act or process. Simply stated, leadership situationally and functionally can be viewed as the performance of acts which assist a group in achieving its preferred outcome. Implicit in the description are the leader's responsibilities to help a group define its goals, assist in the selection of means to these desired ends, and direct activities along the lines selected as best means for achievement of objectives.

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[15]Morphet, Johns, Reller, p 133

[16]Fred E. Fiedler, A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p 261.

This is another way of saying that leadership as a functional process consists of such actions as those which aid in (1) setting goals, (2) moving the group toward its goals, (3) improving the quality of interactions among members, (4) building cohesiveness of the group and (5) making resources available to the group.

Leader Influences

Various writers have expressed the point of view that leadership may be performed by one or several members of a group. These theorists agree that groups differ from one another in many ways. Therefore, the actions required for the achievement of goals of one group may be quite different from those of another. Such diversities from group to group and situation to situation tend to determine which leader functions will be needed at a particular time and who among the members will perform them.

Most students of leadership in the group context now recognize that a "leader" exerts more influence on the group and its activities than does the average member. Agreement is less apparent concerning influences that are uniquely those of leadership. The question becomes: What actually constitutes leadership?

Functions of Leadership

Among those who have attempted to answer this question, Cattell offered perhaps the broadest conception. He suggested that any member of the group leads to the extent that the group is modified by his presence.[17] This inclusive view holds that all group member actions that help the group in any way to achieve its goals are leadership functions.

Theoretical Advantages

Although Cattell's view really is too broad to be of much assistance, particularly in leadership training programs, it does have distinct theoritical advantages. Leadership and group performance when viewed from Cattell's perspective are intertwined. Consequently, and importantly, consideration can be given to questions of determining what goals are important for the group at a given point in time, which functions are important for attaining these goals, and which actions by members of the group contribute to the functions. In this way, acts of leadership can be noted as contributing to goal achievement, group satisfaction, human relations, and all other aspects of group performance.

There is another distinct and consequential advantage of a perspective such as that of Cattell. Leadership can be viewed as something that a person may display in varying degrees. This is in contrast to the idea that a person either has leadership completely or not at all.

17Raymond B. Cattell, "New Concepts for Measuring Leadership in Terms of Group Syntality," Human Relations, 4 (1951), 183.

Tasks

Some writers have preferred to restrict leadership to the performance of a rather limited set of group functions such as planning, decision-making, and coordinating. Such a functional-task approach reflects the work of Krech and Crutchfield who listed fourteen tasks of leadership including executive, planner, policy-maker, expert, external group representative, controller of internal relationships, purveyor of rewards and punishments, arbitrator, exemplar group symbol, surrogate for individual responsibility, ideologist, father figure, and scapegoat.[18]

The Multiplicity of Leadership

Whether or not the fourteen functions accurately represent the scope of leadership may not be too important. The important point is that all these functions may be at one time or another vital to a group. Assuming that at least some may fall under the heading of leadership, the multiplicity of leader functions becomes obvious.

The point is that any member of a group could be a leader in the sense that he or she may engage in actions that serve the group in its efforts toward goal achievement. The so-called leader, as such, may be skilled at some of the functions but completely lacking expertise in others. Other group members may take up the slack as needed and exercise varying types of leadership at particular times under specific circumstances. This is the concept of multiplicity of leadership first alluded to in other terms and in another context under the heading "Leader Influences".

Goal Attainment and Group Maintenance

The changing nature of leadership and required tasks can be demonstrated by distinguishing between group needs and the functions fitted to the various needs and tasks. It goes almost without saying that most group objectives can be subsumed under (1) the achievement of some specific group goal, or (2) the maintenance or strengthening of the group itself. These two aspects, in turn, can be considered as included in the three types of leadership acts of (1) helping a group to define tasks, goals, and purposes, (2) helping a group to achieve its tasks, goals, and purposes, (3) helping to maintain the group by assisting in providing for group and individual needs.[19]

Initiating Structure and Consideration

Some students of leadership and the group process have referred to goal achievement as "initiating structure" and group maintenance as "con-

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[18]David Krech and Richard Crutchfield, Theory and Problems of Social Psychology, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, (1948), pp. 417-22.

[19]Morphet, Johns, Reller, p. 134.

sideration". These "labels" came from leadership studies initiated in 1945 by the Bureau of Business Research at The Ohio State University.[20]

The "labels" for the dimensions of leadership were predicated on a definition of leadership as "the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a goal attainment".[21] As a leadership dimension Initiating Structure refers to "the Leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and members of the work-group and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and methods of procedure." Consideration, on the other hand, refers to "behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, and warmth in the relationship between the leader and members of his staff".[22]

The Ohio State staff developed the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) in an effort to describe how a leader carries out his or her activities. Thus, Initiating Structure and Consideration become dimensions of observed behavior as perceived by others.

Initiating Structure, also known as "getting the job done" or "task oriented behavior", may include several types of action on the part of a leader:

1. Making his attitudes clear to the staff
2. Trying out new ideas with staff
3. Ruling with an "iron hand" (scored negatively)
4. Criticizing poor work
5. Speaking in a matter not to be questioned
6. Assigning staff members to particular tasks
7. Working without a plan (scored negatively)
8. Maintaining definite standards of performance
9. Emphasizing the meeting of deadlines
10. Encouraging use of uniform procedures
11. Making certain that the leader's part in the organization is understood by all
12. Asking that staff members follow standard rules and regulations

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[20]Andrew W. Halpin, "How Leaders Behave," in Fred D. Carver and Thomas Sergiovanni (eds.), Organizations and Human Behavior: Focus on Schools, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, (1969), p. 290.

[21]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 73.

[22]Ibid

13. Letting staff members know what is expected of them

14. Seeing to it that staff members are working up to capacity

15. Seeing to it that the work of staff members is coordinated.

Consideration, sometimes known as "building morale" or "keeping the group happy", may include:

1. Doing personal favors for staff members

2. Doing little things to make it pleasant being a staff member

3. Being easy to understand

4. Finding time to listen to staff members

5. Keeping to himself (scored negatively)

6. Looking out for the personal welfare of individual staff members

7. Refusing to explain his actions (scored negatively)

8. Acting without consulting staff (scored negatively)

9. Being slow to accept new ideas (scored negatively)

10. Treating all staff members as his equals

11. Being willing to make changes

12. Being friendly and approachable

13. Making staff members feel at ease when talking to the leader

14. Putting staff suggestions into operation

15. Getting staff approval on important matters before going ahead.[23]

Coordination as Leadership

It should be emphasized that any behavior in a group situation may be significant. It may have significance for goal achievement (initiation of structure) and group maintenance (consideration).

The two main classes of leader functions in the group may be performed by any member. Yet, they also may well be within the province of the acknowledged leader. However, there are groups in which "specialists" in goal achievement and group maintenance seem to emerge.

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[23]Halpin in Carver and Sergiovanni (eds.), p. 291

Perhaps there is one person who strives for task or goal accomplishment while another satisfies social and emotional needs of members. In such situations the group's effective performance depends upon the development of appropriate coordination between the "specialists." It is possible, then, that this coordination becomes the responsibility of the person designated as leader, and this may be true even when the leader is playing the role of one of the "specialists."

Additional Evidence--Initiating Structure - Consideration

The basic idea that Initiating Structure and Consideration are the important dimensions of leadership has been reinforced by research in large organizations. For example, factor analytic studies as part of the on-going leadership research at Ohio State showed that the two factors, Initiating Structure and Consideration, represent 83 percent of the common variance in leader behavior in the organizational context.[24] According to this evidence, items with a high positive loading on Initiating Structure are similar to those discussed earlier under the heading "Initiating Structure and Consideration." These are the leader behaviors tending to specify role expectations for members and seeking to establish patterns of organization, communication channels and ways of getting the job done.

As would be anticipated, items with high positive loadings on the Consideration dimension are associated with what might be termed morale building behavior. This is behavior perceived as indicating friendship, mutual trust, respect, and some feeling of warmth between the leader and the group.[25]

Conclusions

In studying leader behavior the Ohio State staff found that Initiating Structure and Consideration were separate and distinct dimensions. It should be stressed that high on one dimension does not necessitate being low on the other. The behavior as a leader usually could be described as any mix of both dimensions. The behavior of the most effective leader usually could be described as being high in both dimensions, Initiating Structure and Consideration. In the final analysis, LBDQ could yield four types of leader behavior exhibiting various combinations of Initiating Structure (task behavior) and Consideration (relationships behavior) including: (1) High Consideration and Low Structure, (2) Low Structure and Low Consideration, (3) High Structure and High Consideration, and (4) High Structure and Low Consideration.

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[24]Cartwright and Zander, p. 307

[25]Ibid

[26]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 74

In summary, leader behavior high in both initiation of structure and consideration efforts should tend to increase group effectiveness. This is to say that more productive groups in terms of goal accomplishment should result from leader behavior rated high in both initiating structure and consideration. In other words, if task, structure etc. are stressed in conjunction with morale building activities, the result should be an effective group. The message for leader behavior and particularly for leadership training programs should be clear, as long as one keeps in mind the fact that one dimension may be emphasized in one situation while the other dimension might require the emphasis in another situation.

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